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Present

YING AND TURTLE ISLAND QUARTETS

Tuesday, January 22, 2008, 8:00 p.m.

CANTUS

Tuesday, February 12, 2008, 8:00 p.m.

STUDE CONCERT HALL

ALICE PRATT BROWN HALL

RICE UNIVERSITY



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YING AND TURTLE ISLAND QUARTETS

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Ying Quartet

TIMOTHY YING – VIOLIN

JANET YING – VIOLIN

PHILLIP YING – VIOLA

DAVID YING – CELLO

Turtle Island Quartet

DAVID BALAKRISHNAN – VIOLIN, BARITONE VIOLIN

MADS TOLLING – VIOLIN

JEREMY KITTEL – VIOLA

MARK SUMMER – CELLO

This performance is generously underwritten by the
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The Ying Quartet is represented by:
Melvin Kaplan Incorporated
115 College Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401

Turtle Island Quartet is represented by:
Baylin Artists Management
196 W. Ashland Street, Suite 201
Doylestown, PA 18901

~ PROGRAM ~

QUARTET IN F MAJOR (1903)..... *Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)*

I. Allegro moderato: Très doux Ying Quartet

II. Assez vif: Très rythmé

III. Très lent

IV. Vif et agité

Selections to be announced from the stage..... Turtle Island Quartet

~ INTERMISSION ~

LA CRÉATION DU MONDE (1922-3)... *Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)*

Arranged by Danny Seidenberg

Ying and Turtle Island Quartets

JULIE-O (1988)..... *Mark Summer*

Mark Summer & David Ying

MARA'S GARDEN OF FALSE DELIGHTS (2002)... *David Balakrishnan*

I. Sri Jo

Ying and Turtle Island Quartets

II. Doughboy

III. Snakes and Ladders

VARIATIONS ON AN UNORIGINAL THEME (2002)..... *Evan Price*

Ying and Turtle Island Quartets

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)
Quartet in F Major (1903)

The move away from Germanic influence by French artists after the nation's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war was the result of a deliberate albeit spontaneous impulse to distance themselves from everything German. Thus, post-war France saw the explosive emergence of a distinctive French voice in literature, poetry, painting and music. Into that world Ravel was born in 1875 to a Swiss-French father and a Spanish-Basque mother. The father, an engineer-inventor with a Swiss degree in music harmony, was in Spain building railways when he met, and married the young Basque in 1874; Maurice was born there. The Ravels soon moved to Paris where they seem to have provided their young son with a happy and music-filled childhood. At age 14 he entered the Paris Conservatory as a piano student. Although admired for his compositions by fellow-classmates, he failed to impress the staid faculty of the Conservatory, won no prizes, and, by age 20, he left. Away from the Conservatory, he worked with Stravinsky in Switzerland while continuing to experiment on his own, viewing with admiration the iconoclasts Eric Satie and Debussy, while at the same time he was drawn to the individuality of the self-taught composers Chabrier and Mussorgsky. He ultimately returned to the Paris Conservatory, now under the direction of the more forward-looking Gabriel Fauré with whom he would study until age 29. This second apprenticeship at the Conservatory was again characterized by frustrations and disappointments thanks to an academic hierarchy largely uninterested in contemporary ideas. Despite Fauré's support, Ravel failed to win a Prix de Rome four times even though he already had recognition outside the school. When, now age 28, Ravel showed Fauré the mostly finished score of his string quartet Fauré criticized it severely and asked for a revision. Instead, Ravel sent it to Debussy whose own string quartet was a success of 10 years' standing. Debussy's famous response: "In the name of the gods of music and for my sake personally, do not lay another finger on your Quartet." At publication it was dedicated to Fauré.

The Quartet is in four luminous movements. The first movement, marked "très doux," starts with deceptive simplicity—an ascending diatonic scale underpinning a guileless melody. Although tonality is never in doubt, Ravel makes great use of the ambiguous parallel chord progressions so characteristic of the modern French School. The effect is dreamy. The second movement is rhythmically complex, with many passages written simultaneously in 6/8 and 3/4 time, evoking the vigorous cross accents of music from the Iberian Peninsula. Ravel introduces extensive use of plucked

strings in this movement, alternating with the muffled sound of muted strings in the middle section. The slow third movement injects thematic material from the first while employing various meters and a lush display of colors. The Finale is rhythmically bold, opening with a meter of 5/8, then changing to 5/4 and 3/4. A rambunctious Spanish dance influence is unmistakable, as is the music's debt to the new French school.

The Galimir Quartet made the first recording of this remarkable piece in Paris in the 1930s under the direct supervision of the Maurice Ravel.

Program note © by Nora Avins Klein, December 2007.

DARIUS MILHAUD (1892-1974)
La Création du Monde (1922-23)

Long recognized as one of Darius Milhaud's best works, the ballet *La Création du Monde* had its Paris premiere in 1923. A creation myth based on African folklore and inspired by his 1920 Harlem encounter with New Orleans jazz, with it Milhaud made the first significant attempt to combine jazz and European classical music in a concert work. The original ballet is in six continuous sections – Overture, Chaos before Creation, Slowly Lifting Darkness and the Creation Living Things, Man and Woman Created, The Desire of Man and Woman, Coda – the Man and Woman Kiss.

Program note provided by Turtle Island Quartet, 2007.

MARK SUMMER
Julie-O (1988)

Julie-O was originally written for solo cello in 1988 and appeared on Turtle Island's recording *Metropolis*, released that same year. Inspired by the rhythmic drive of American fiddle tunes and imbued with the characteristic *brio* of much of Mark's other work, this duo version of *Julie-O* strives to give each player plenty of space to showcase both the melodic possibilities and the multitude of percussive techniques available to this most exquisite instrument.

Program note provided by Turtle Island Quartet, 2007.

DAVID BALAKRISHNAN

Mara's Garden of False Delights (2002)

When the Buddha sat under the Bodhi Tree making his bid for enlightenment, his greatest challenge came from Mara, the king of the demons. Mara paraded all of life's various pleasures in front of him, trying to tempt him from his goal. *Mara's Garden of False Delights* is a personal musical vision of the realm of those enticements.

The three movements correspond with the three *gunas*, or states of being, in Hindu philosophy. The first movement, *Sri-Jo*, denotes love, the expression of an open heart. This falls within the realm of the *sattva guna*, the peaceful loving and calm state of being. *Doughboy*, invoking the *tamas guna* state of sloth and torpor, calls to mind the comforting blanket of self-pity that one wraps oneself in when wallowing in a negative pattern. *Snakes and Ladders* is named after the popular board game which originated in ancient India. It puts one through a chaotic journey of climbing and falling from the back of a snake while attempting to be the first to reach the top rung—a metaphor for the ups and downs of the game of life. This is *rajas guna*, the state of constantly changing passions such as fury, longing, terror, exhilaration, despair and bliss.

All beings are said to manifest various amalgams of the *gunas*, similar in theory to the Yin-Yang principle of the relationship between opposites. This is reflected musically in the thematic development throughout the three movements. For example, the *sattvic* (sweet) movement, *Sri-Jo*, starts with a *rajasic* (pungent) flourish that returns in the last movement. Similarly, the poignant viola melody in the middle of the *tamasic* (dull) *Doughboy* provides a brief interlude of *sattvic* sweetness. The shifting textures of the *rajasic Snakes and Ladders* sporadically incorporate thematic material recalling the *sattvic* or *tamasic* moods of the first two movements. Such juxtapositions of opposites are meant to accentuate the dominant personality traits of each of the movements.

The concept of Yin-Yang also found its way into the scheme of the composition through the process of writing for two distinctly different sets of musicians. The challenge was to highlight the diverse strengths of the members of each quartet while also revealing how those elements commonly associated with one group can exist on a subtler plane in the other. For instance, TISQ, well known for its exploration of jazz styles, spends a surprising amount of time working on musical aspects normally associated with the classical tradition, such as historical performance practice and ensemble clarity. The Ying Quartet, a quartet widely regarded

as one of the finest exponents of the western Classical tradition, commonly focuses on developing performance techniques that allow for more freedom of spontaneous expression, strikingly similar to the approach of a jazz group. A vital component of the piece is this stretching of stereotypical expectations in striving to create a cohesive whole from a wellspring of diversity.

With so much emphasis on the influence of Asian thought and approach, it is easy to assume that the music might maintain an analogous cultural bias. In fact, this is not so. In yet another manifestation of the Yin-Yang principle, the relatively tiny amount of Asian musical elements actually present in what is an almost entirely western-styled piece nonetheless provides the key framework of identity and the inspirational point of departure for composer, performer and listener alike.

Mara's Garden of False Delights was commissioned by the Lied Center at the University of Kansas, Porter Center at Brevard College & Minnesota State University/Moorhead.

Program note provided by Turtle Island Quartet, 2007.

EVAN PRICE

Variations on an Unoriginal Theme (2002)

Despite its title, *Variations* is an original work which functions both as a primer in the history of the string quartet and as a good-natured *battle-of-the-bands*. Listeners can cheer for their favorite group while following the Haydnesque theme as it morphs into an Irish jig, a Mendelssohn *scherzo*, a gospel shout, a delicate Ravelian tableau, a Cuban mambo and even a bit of James Brown funk.

Program note provided by Turtle Island Quartet, 2007.

Ying Quartet

The Ying Quartet's reputation for "instinctive unanimity" and "astonishing, refreshing exaltation and exhilaration" is matched by its unparalleled success in making creative connections between chamber music and other art forms in ways that have great public appeal. Its long list

of imaginative projects includes "No Boundaries," an innovative visiting residency at Symphony Space in New York City; an exploration with the Turtle Island String Quartet of jazz, improvisation, and the classical string tradition; a program with folk musician Mike Seeger showing the influence of traditional folk music on contemporary American classical composition; and *Hyperscore*, a revolutionary online graphic compositional application that allows amateurs as well as musicians to compose using a personal computer.

The Ying siblings began their career as an ensemble in 1992 in the farm town of Jesup, Iowa, (population 2000) as one of the first ensembles involved in the Chamber Music America (then NEA) Rural Residency Program. The Quartet participated fully in the community, performing on countless occasions for audiences of six to 600 in a residency so successful that it was widely chronicled in the national and international media, including features in *The New York Times* and *STRAD* magazine and on *CBS Sunday Morning*.

The Ying Quartet won recognition for its exceptional musical qualities when it was honored with the 1993 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. In the years since, the Yings have established an international reputation for excellence in performance with appearances in virtually every major American city. The EMI Classics recording of works by Osvaldo Golijov on which the Ying Quartet appears with the St. Lawrence Quartet was nominated for a 2003 Grammy Award. *4 + Four*, a Ying/Turtle Island recording, was released in the spring of 2005 on the Telarc label, and received a 2006 Grammy® Award in the *Best Classical Crossover* Category.

With "Musical Dim Sum," which the Ying Quartet recently performed at a Chinese restaurant in Los Angeles and performed at the Kennedy Center last season, the Yings continue to extend their innovative programming concepts while celebrating their own cultural heritage. These programs include a selection of short works by Chinese American composers in the framework of a traditional concert, giving audiences the treat of a diverse sampling of this music. The Quartet plans to commission new works by composers of Chinese background living around the globe to join existing pieces by Chou Wen-Chung, Zhou Long, Tan Dun, Bright Sheng, and Chen Yi.

As Quartet-in-Residence at the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester, the Ying Quartet plans and directs a rigorous, sequential chamber music curriculum that integrates intensive musical instruction with training in creative presentation and communication skills, and includes practical performance opportunities throughout the

greater Rochester community. The Quartet has also taught at Northwestern University and at the Interlochen and Brevard Music Festivals, and since 2001, the members of the Ying Quartet have been the Blodgett Artists in Residence at Harvard University.

Visit the Ying Quartet on the World Wide Web at www.ying4.com.

Turtle Island Quartet

Its name derived from creation mythology found in Native American Folklore, the Turtle Island Quartet has been a singular force in the creation of bold, new trends in chamber music for strings since its inception in 1985. Winner of the 2006 Grammy® Award for *Best Classical Crossover Recording of the Year*, Turtle Island fuses the classical quartet esthetic with contemporary American musical styles, and by devising a performance practice that honors both, the state of the art has inevitably been redefined. Cellist nonpareil Yo-Yo Ma has proclaimed Turtle Island to be “a unified voice that truly breaks new ground – authentic and passionate – a reflection of some of the most creative music-making today.”

The Quartet's birth was the result of violinist David Balakrishnan's brainstorming explorations and compositional vision while writing his master's thesis at Antioch University West. The journey has taken Turtle Island through forays into folk, bluegrass, swing, be-bop, funk, R&B, new age, rock, hip-hop, as well as music of Latin America and India ...a repertoire consisting of hundreds of ingenious arrangements and originals. It has included over a dozen recordings, soundtracks for major motion pictures, television and radio credits such as the *Today Show*, *All Things Considered*, *Prairie Home Companion*, and *Morning Edition*.

A unique element of the Turtle Island Quartet is their revival of venerable improvisational and compositional chamber traditions that have not been explored by string players for nearly 200 years. At the time of Haydn's apocryphal creation of the string quartet form, musicians were more akin to today's saxophonists and keyboard masters of the jazz and pop world, i.e., improvisers, composers, and arrangers. Each Turtle Island member is accomplished in these areas of expertise as well as having extensive conservatory training as instrumentalists.

One result of this dedication can be seen in Turtle Island's phenomenal international appeal, particularly in Europe where chamber music remains a vital facet of life. What was once termed 'alternative' chamber music now

firmly inhabits the mainstream. Turtle Island members refine their skills through unusual and endemic 're-compositions' of works by the old masters, through the development of repertory by some of today's cutting edge composers, through performances and recordings with major symphonic ensembles, and through a determined educational commitment.

David Balakrishnan (violin, baritone violin) graduated from UCLA with a B.A. in music composition and violin and earned a masters degree in music composition at Antioch University West. While his thirty some odd years as a world-class jazz violinist qualify him as one of the pioneers of the extant genre, it is as a composer that he has had the greatest impact.

Mads Tolling (violin), has received Denmark's Sankt Annae's Award for Musical Excellence as well as grants from Queen Margaret, the Sonning Foundation and the Berklee Elvin Jones Award. Tolling grew up in Copenhagen, Denmark and moved to the U.S. at the age of 20 to pursue jazz studies. He studied under violinist Matt Glaser, graduating summa cum laude from Berklee College of Music in Boston in 2003. While still attending Berklee, the renowned jazz violinist Jean-Luc Ponty recommended Tolling to join Stanley Clarke's band. Since then, he has performed more than 100 concerts with Clarke worldwide, including the Newport Jazz Festival and the Hollywood Bowl. Besides his activities as a performer, Tolling is an accomplished composer.

Jeremy Kittel (viola) Celtic fiddler and Jazz violinist Jeremy Kittel is rapidly earning a reputation as one of the nation's most creative young musicians, equally adept at a wide range of styles including Scottish, Irish, jazz, contemporary classical and bluegrass. The 2000 US National Scottish Fiddle Champion and Junior National Champion of 1998 and 1999, in 2003 he won the Alfred Award for Best Improvisation, Mark O'Connor Award of Merit and International Association for Jazz Education Award for Best Jazz Performance. Since then, Jeremy has been awarded the Daniel Pearl Memorial Violin, the 2004 Detroit Music Award for Outstanding Acoustic Instrumentalist, 2005 and 2006 Detroit Music Awards for Outstanding Folk Artist, 2006 Detroit Music Awards for Outstanding Jazz Album and Outstanding Jazz Composer, and the ASTA Alternative Strings Award for Music Traditions. He graduated from the University of Michigan at 20, earning their highest musical honor, the Stanley Medal, and has a Master of Music from Manhattan School of Music.

Mark Summer (cello) is a founding member of Turtle Island, and is widely regarded, thanks not least to his phenomenal percussion and pizzicato techniques, as one of the outstanding cellists of our time. A graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music, he was a tenured member of

the Winnipeg Symphony for three years, before leaving the orchestra to perform in several Canadian contemporary and Baroque ensembles, as well as his own group, The West-End String Band. In 1985 he was invited by David Balakrishnan to help form the quartet. He continued to touch base with his classical roots, performing with the Chamber Symphony of San Francisco, the Oakland Symphony, Oakland Ballet, and the contemporary music ensemble, Earplay. In the twenty-one years since embarking on an improvisational musical odyssey, Summer has continued to develop a unique and multi-timbered style. His more notable cello exploits include performing the Brahms Clarinet Trio in a sandstone grotto by the banks of the Colorado River in Moab, Utah, and a performance on Taos Mountain at 11,000 feet on a cello made of ice.

Visit the Turtle Island Quartet on the World Wide Web at www.tisq.com.